

II.—*Remarks on an Inscription in the Ranjá and Tibetan (U'chhén) Characters, taken from a Temple on the Confines of the Valley of Nepál. By B. H. HODGSON, Esq. Resident.*

On the main road from the valley of Nepal to Tibet, by the Eastern or Kúti Pass of the Hemáchal, and about two miles beyond the ridge of hills environing the valley, there stands a diminutive stone *chaitya*, supported, as usual, by a wide, graduated, basement.

Upon the outer surface of the retaining walls of this basement are inscribed a variety of texts from the Bauddha Scriptures, and amongst others, the celebrated Shad-Akshari Mantra, *Om Mani Padme Hom.* This is an invocation of PADMÁ PÁNI, the 4th Dhyáni Bodhisatwa, and præsens Divus of the Theistic school of Buddhists—with an accessory mention of their triad, under that symbolic, literal form which is common to them and to the Brahmanists*. It is not, however, my present purpose to dwell upon the real and full import of these words; but to exhibit the inscription itself, as an interesting specimen of the practical conjunction of those two varieties of the Devanágari letters which may be said to belong respectively and appropriately to the Saugatas of Nepál and of Tibet. Not that *both* forms have not been long familiar to the Tibetans, but that they still consider, and call, that one *foreign* and *Indian* which the Nipálese Bauddha Scriptures exhibit as the ordinary *écriture*; and which, though allowed by the Nipalese to be Indian, and though most certainly deduceable from the Devanágari standard, is not now, nor has been for ages, extant in any part of India.

cold-blooded executions which he caused to be done upon many innocent persons, erected a temple to MAHESWAR (SIVA), and first established Hinduism as the religion of the realm. According to one author, CHU CHENG PHA' ascended the throne in the year of Sakádityá 1524 (A. D. 1602), while another author places the occurrence fourteen years later. He died A. S. 1563, (A. D. 1641.)

I think Dr. BUCHANAN must have been wrongly informed, when he asserts the conversion of the royal family to the new faith was effected in the reign of GADADHAR SINGH, who he calls the fourteenth prince of the family; while I make him out to be the twenty-ninth in succession to CHU KA PHA'; he was however the first Ahom sovereign who took the Hindu title, which may have led the Dr. to credit the information communicated to him.

The proper name of the king GADA'DHAR SINGH was CHU PAT PHA', and he reigned from A. S. 1603 to 1617, (A. D. 1681 to 1695.) In A. D. 1692-3, he dispossessed all the Bhukuts of their possessions, and compelled them to reside together in Kámrup, in Upper Assam; and in the year following, he cast all the images of the votaries of VISHNU into the Bruhmaputra.

* Viz. the triliteral syllable Om, composed of the letters A, U, and M, typifying, with the Brahmanists, Brahmá, Vishnu, and Mahesá—but with the Buddhists, Buddha, Dharmá, and Sanga.

It is peculiarly Nipálese; and all the old Sanscrit works of the Bauddhas of Nepál are written in this character, or, in the cognate style denominated Bhujin Múlá—which latter, however, I do but incidentally name. I wish here to draw attention to the fact that that form of writing or system of letters called Lantza in Tibet, and there considered foreign and Indian, though no where extant in the plains of India, is the *common vehicle of the Sanscrit language amongst the Bauddhas of Nepál proper*, by whom it is denominated Ranjá, and written thus, in Devanágari रंजा; *Ranjá* therefore, and not according to a barbarian metamorphosis *Lantza*, it *should* be called by us; and, by way of further and clearer distinction, the Nipálese variety of Devanágari. Obviously deduceable as this form is, from the Indian standard, and still enshrined as it is in numerous *Sanscrit* works, it is an interesting circumstance to observe it, in *practical collocation* with the ordinary Tibetan form—likewise, undoubtedly Indian, but far less easily traceable to its source in the Devanágari alphabet, and devoted to the expression of a language *radically different from Sanscrit*. Nor when it is considered that Ranjá is the common extant vehicle of those original Sanscrit works of which the Tibetan books are translations, will the interest of an inscription, traced *on one slab in both characters*, be denied to be considerable. Singular indications, indeed, are these of that gradual process of transplantation, whereby a large portion of Indian literature was naturalized beyond the Himálaya, as well as of the gradual eradication of that literature from the soil of its birth, where, for four centuries probably, the *very memory of it* has passed away*! Those who are engaged at present in decyphering ancient inscriptions would do well, I conceive, to essay the tracing, through Ranjá and Bhujin Múlá†, of the transmutation of Devanágari into the Tibetan alphabet. In conclusion, I may observe, that this habit of promulgating the *mantras* of their faith, by inscriptions patent on the face of religious edifices, is peculiar to the Tibetan Buddhists, those of Nepál considering it a high crime thus to subject them to vulgar, and perchance uninitiated utterance.

The Tibetan sentiment and practice are, in *this* respect, both the more orthodox and the more rational. But in another important respect, the Nipálese followers of Buddha are far more rational at least, if far less orthodox, than their neighbours: for they have utterly rejected that absurd and mischievous adherence to religious mendicancy and monachism which still distinguishes the Tibetans‡.

* The very names of the numerous Sanscrit Bauddha works recently discovered in Nepál were totally unknown to the Pandits of the plains, who received the announcement of the discovery with absolute disbelief.

† All the four systems of letters are given in the 16th vol. of the *As. Researches*.

‡ The curious may like to know that Tibetan Buddhism is distinguished from

I need hardly add, after what has been just stated, that the circumstance of the inscriptions being *mantras* proves the temple or *chaitya*, adverted to, to be the work of Tibetans, though existing on the very confines of Nepál proper—a fact indeed which, on the spot, wants no *such* confirmation. It is notorious; and is referrible to times when Tibetan influence was predominant on this side of the Himálaya. The great temple of *Khása chit*, standing in the midst of the valley of Nepál, is still exclusively appropriated by the Trans-Himálayans.

Note.—So much has been published on the subject of the mystical *mantra* above alluded to, that it is unnecessary to do more than direct the attention of the reader to the learned dissertation by GEORGI in the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, page 500, &c. and to a more recent elucidation of the same subject in KLAPROTH'S *Fragmens Bouddhiques* in the *Journ. Asiatique*, Mars, 1831, p. 27.—The *mantra* is quite unknown to the Buddhists of Ceylon and the Eastern Peninsula, and it forms a peculiar feature of the Tibetan Buddhism, shewing its adoption of much of the Brahmanical mystic philosophy. A wooden block, cut in Tibet for printing the very passage in the two characters, and from its appearance of some antiquity, is deposited in the museum of the Asiatic Society.—ED.

Note.—M. KLAPROTH, in his memoir in the *Nouveau Journal Asiatique*, where he has brought so much of the erudition of Eastern and Central Asia to bear upon this Buddhist formulary, attaches himself to two versions principally, as preferable to all that he finds elsewhere among Tibetans, Mongolians, and Chinese. The former is, “Oh precieux Lotus! Amen,” on the supposition of *ॐ मणिपद्म ह्रं* being the true reading; but if it be read, as he justly prefers, *ॐ मणिपद्मे ह्रं*, “Oh! le joyau est dans le Lotus. Amen.”

There is no objection to the former translation, that of “*Om mani-padma húm* :” for the two nouns cannot be read as *separate* vocatives, “Oh jewel! Oh Lotus!” (as M. CSOMA DE KÖRÖS informs us it is understood in Tibet,) without reading *mané मणे* instead of *मणि*.

The latter translation of “*Om mani padmé húm*” is not equally admissible: for it would require indispensably by grammatical rule, either the insertion of a *Visarga* after *mani*, or the substitution of a long *i* for the short one, so distinctly marked in the inscription; i. e. the nominative *मणिः* or *मणिो* instead of the crude form *मणि*. The junction of the two nouns in one compound is therefore as necessary in the reading of the locative case, as in that of the vocative; and this makes it necessary to translate it thus: “AUM (i. e. the mystic triform divinity) is in the jewel-like Lotus. Amen.” The legends cited by M. KLAPROTH respecting BUDDHA apply as well to this version of the formulary as to his. I hope that Mr. HODGSON may hereafter favour us with the import of these words, as explained in the yet unexplored treasures of *Sanscrit* Buddhist literature in Nepál.” W. H. M.

Nipálese, *solely* by the two features above pointed out—unless we must add a qualified subjection on the part of the Saugatás of Nepál to caste, from which the Tibetans are free; but which in Nepál is a merely popular usage, stript of the sanction of religion, and altogether a very different thing from caste, properly so called.